

52 ifomvrc ZOLA, NOVELIST AND
REFORMER

calling on the Deity to manifest himself in
order that
he may believe in him, asking the why and
the wherefore
of things, and displaying a grim consciousness
of the
wretchedness of mankind. There are lines in
this poem
of his twentieth year which suggest the Zola
of the last
stage:

" Helas! qtie tout est noir dans la valise
liumaine !
Les hommes en troupeaux se parquent dans la
plaine,
Vivant BUT des egouts, qu'entoure un mar
croulant."

As his vacation drew to a close, Zola once
more bestirred
himself, and, after consultation with his friends,
decided to
make another attempt to secure the diploma
which would
prove an " open sesame" to regular
employment. But he
did not care to face the Paris examiners again;
he preferred
to try those of Marseilles, thinking, perhaps,
that they
might prove more indulgent. So, taking up his
books to
refresh his memory, he lingered in Provence till
November.

At Marseilles, however, even his comparative
success in
Paris was denied him. He failed with his
preliminary
papers and was not even summoned for the
vivd-voce ex-
amination. That defeat was decisive. When
he returned
to Paris he found his mother cast down by it;
the friends
who helped her had lost all faith in his

ability. It was
useless for him to return to the Lycée. In
another four
months he would be twenty years of age; he
must no longer
remain a burden on others, it was time for him
to earn his
own living. But how was he to do so ? The
outlook was
gloomy indeed.